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Kara Detty

East Tennessee State University

Lauren Fabrize

East Tennessee State University

Mary Trifiro

East Tennessee State University

Jessica Weiner

East Tennessee State University

Brenda Louw

East Tennessee State University, louwb1@etsu.edu

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Clinician-Research Collaboration: Determining Research Interests and Needs of Clinicians in the Tri-Cities, TN

Kara Detty, B.S., Lauren Fabrize, B.S., Mary Trifiro, B.S., Jessica Weiner, B.S. and Brenda Louw, D.Phil.
Department of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology • East Tennessee State University • Johnson City, Tennessee

Abstract

This research explores the disconnect between researchers and practicing clinicians on research collaboration, which is attributed to various barriers, therefore creating a researcher-clinician gap. Survey research was conducted and practicing clinicians in the Tri-Cities region of Tennessee acted as respondents. Results may contribute to establishing practicing clinician-research collaboration in this context.

Introduction

The research-clinician gap has been acknowledged in the literature and has been attributed to a variety of factors. According to Olswang and Prelock (2015), this term refers to a gap between "what we know, and what we do" in the profession, and is essentially the gap between knowledge and evidence.

- Olswang and Goldstein (2017) suggest bridging this researcher-clinician gap through an active partnership during the research and development process. Researchers need to work together with practicing clinicians in order to help better understand delivery needs, which results in an active partnership between research and delivery (Olswang & Goldstein, 2017).
- Three major barriers that prevent clinicians from research collaboration include lack of time, limited education and training, and lack of funding (Craig, 2014). Despite these barriers, collaboration is crucial for the development of evidence-based (EB) resources for clinicians and to ensure the best outcomes for clients.
- Involving practicing clinicians in research by formulating and answering questions relating directly to clinical practice has also been suggested to address the researcher-clinician gap (Olswang & Goldstein, 2017). A first step to bridge this gap is to determine the research interests and needs of practicing clinicians. This should lead to the identification of research areas of shared interest and can form the basis of new research collaborations.

The purpose of this survey research was to determine and describe the research interests and needs of practicing clinicians in the Tri-Cities area in Tennessee.

Methods

Research design: An exploratory, descriptive design with quantitative and qualitative analysis was used.

Procedure: IRB approval was obtained for distributing the survey to practicing clinicians in the Tri-Cities region. After the initial request for participation, two reminder emails were sent to increase the number of respondents. Snowballing was encouraged throughout the distribution of the survey due to typical low response rates in survey research (Blessing & Forister, 2012).

Participants: 24 practicing clinicians in the Tri-Cities region of Tennessee acted as respondents. The majority of respondents obtained a master's degree (96%; N=24) with 1 holding a doctorate. Respondents' experience in the profession ranged from 1 to 31+ years, with more than half of the respondents (66%) being employed for less than 15 years.

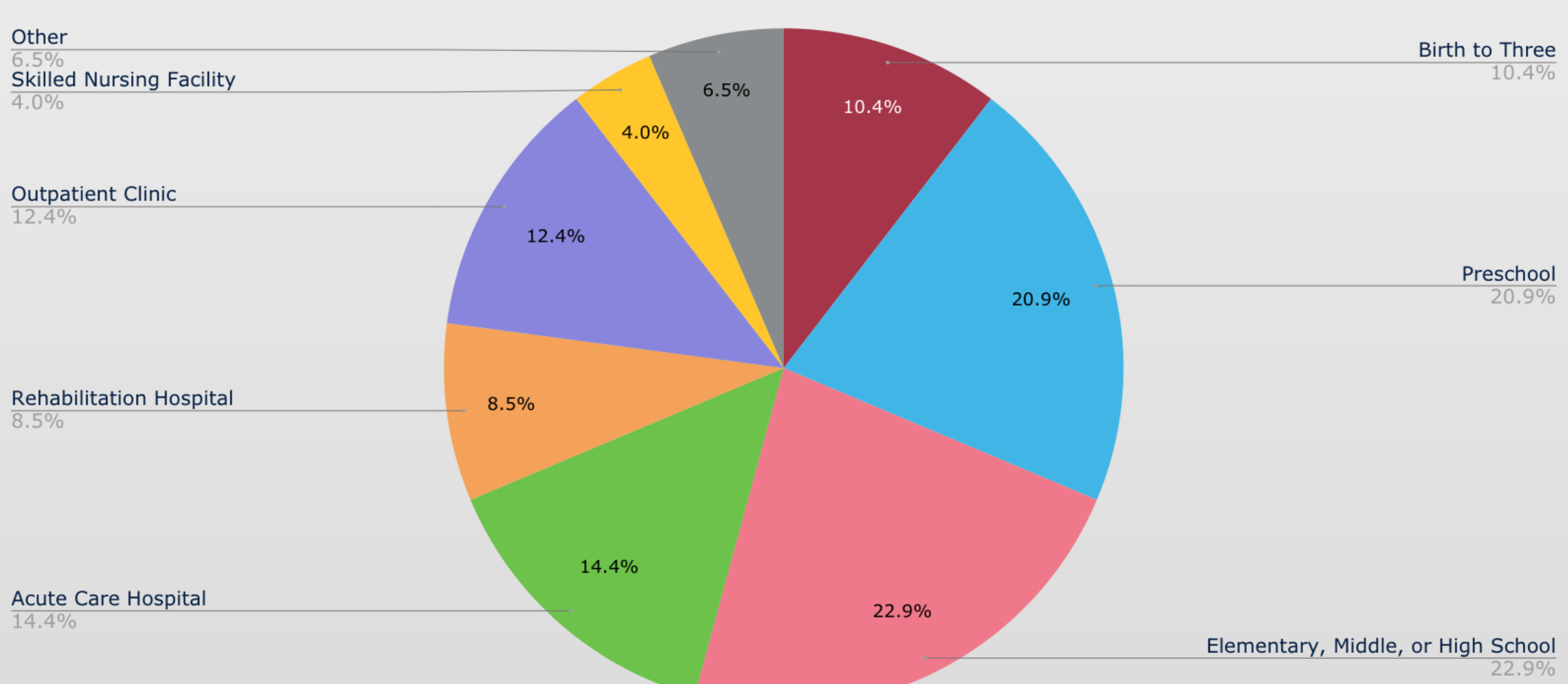


Figure 1. Work setting of respondents (N=24).

Results

67% of respondents reported they were interested in collaboration on research, 17% were unsure, and 16% were not interested. The areas of interest are illustrated below.

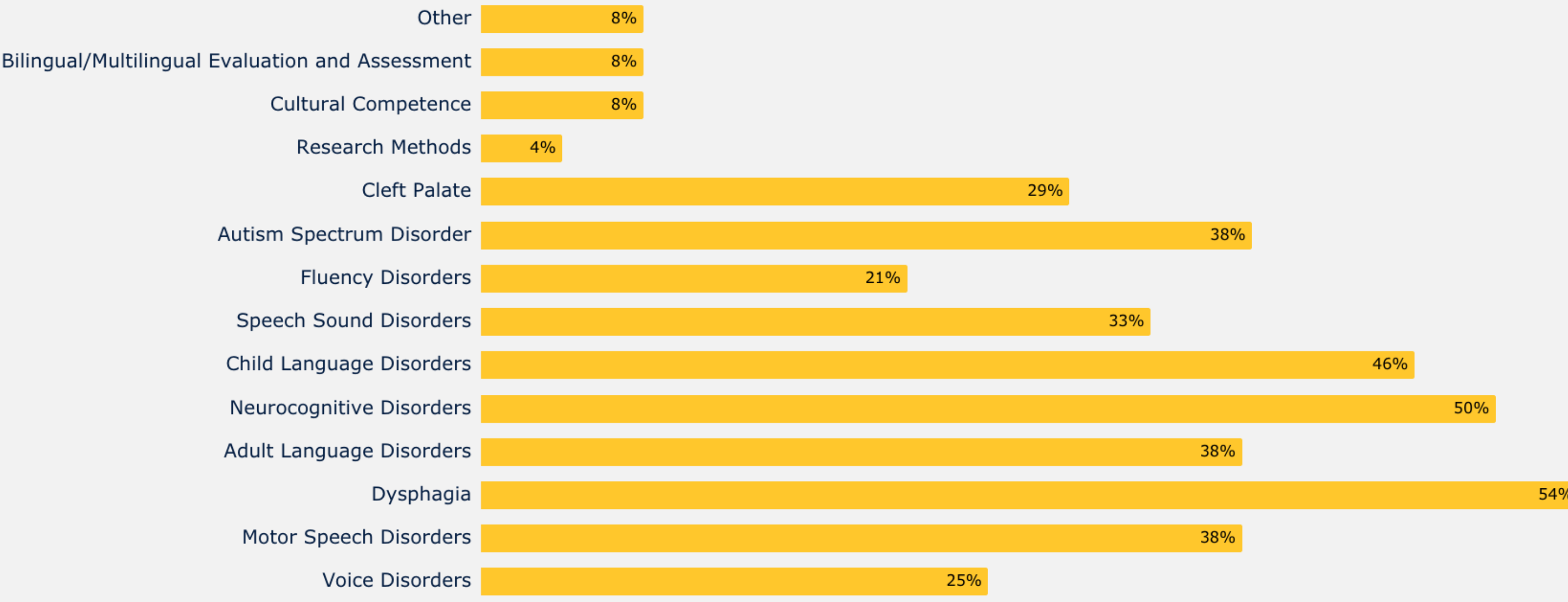


Figure 2. Research interests of respondents (N=24)

According to *Figure 2*, it appears that the respondents had a range of research interests with dysphagia (54%), neurocognitive disorders (50%), and child language (46%) being the most prevalent.

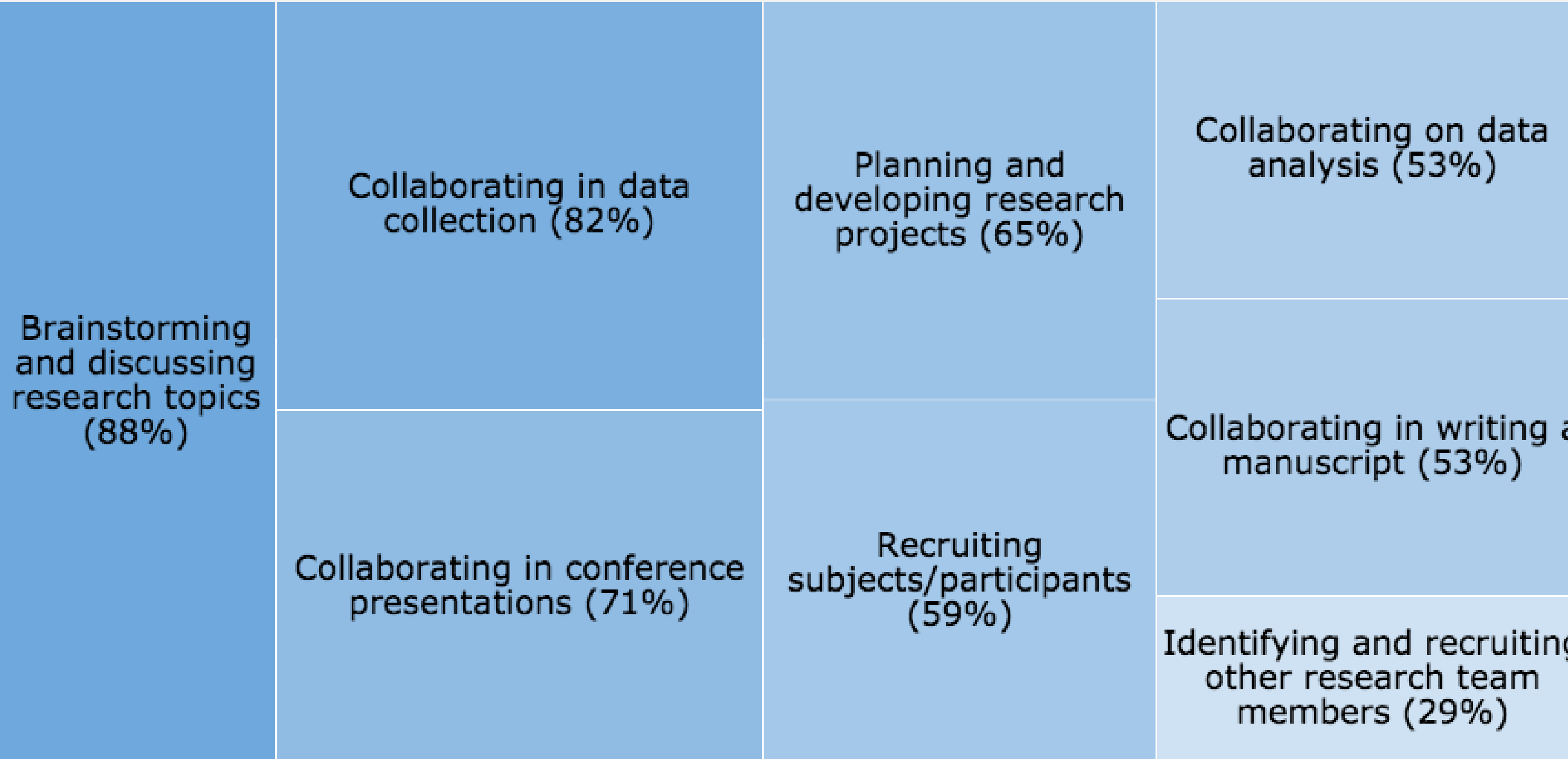


Figure 3. Preferences for roles in research collaboration (N=24)

The respondents' main interest were in discussing research topics and collaborating on data collection. Collaboration would ensure that the research problems are approached by different perspectives (Olswang & Goldstein, 2017).

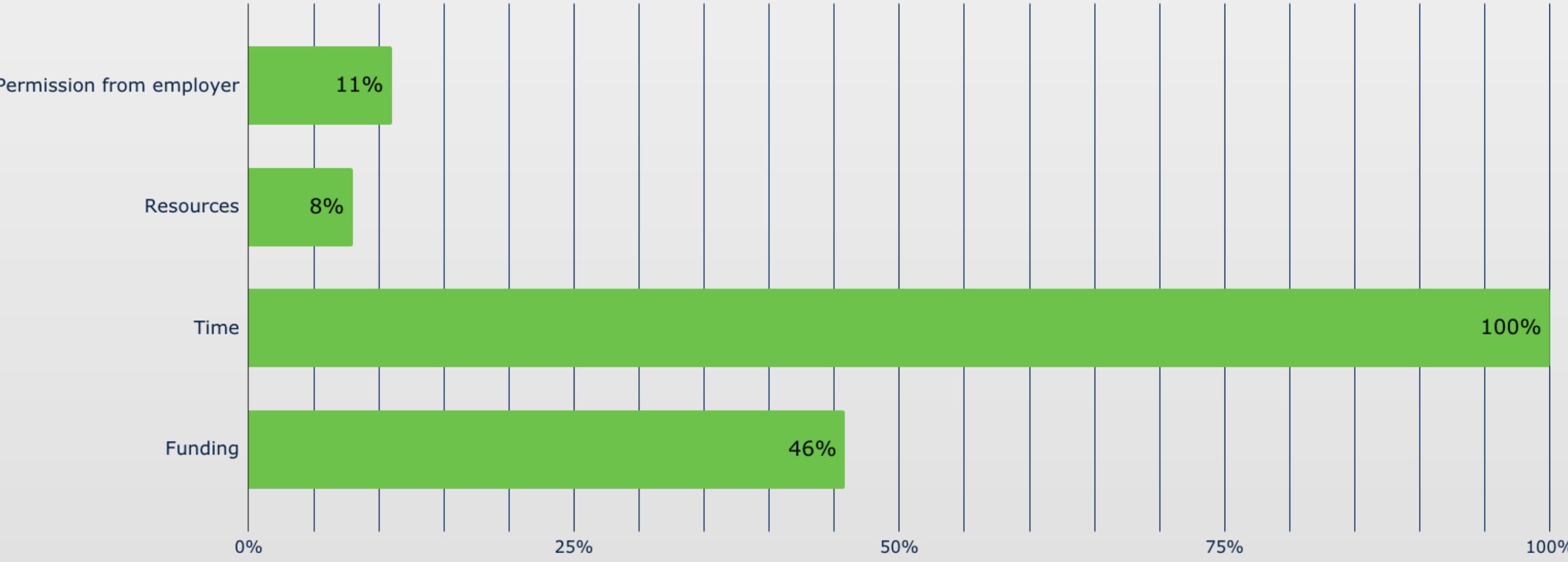


Figure 4. Perceived barriers to research collaboration (N=24)

Time was perceived by all to be the biggest barrier to collaborate on research, which can be attributed to large caseloads and high productivity demands. This could hamper joint projects. Funding for research was another important barrier, which validates the factors cited by Craig (2014).

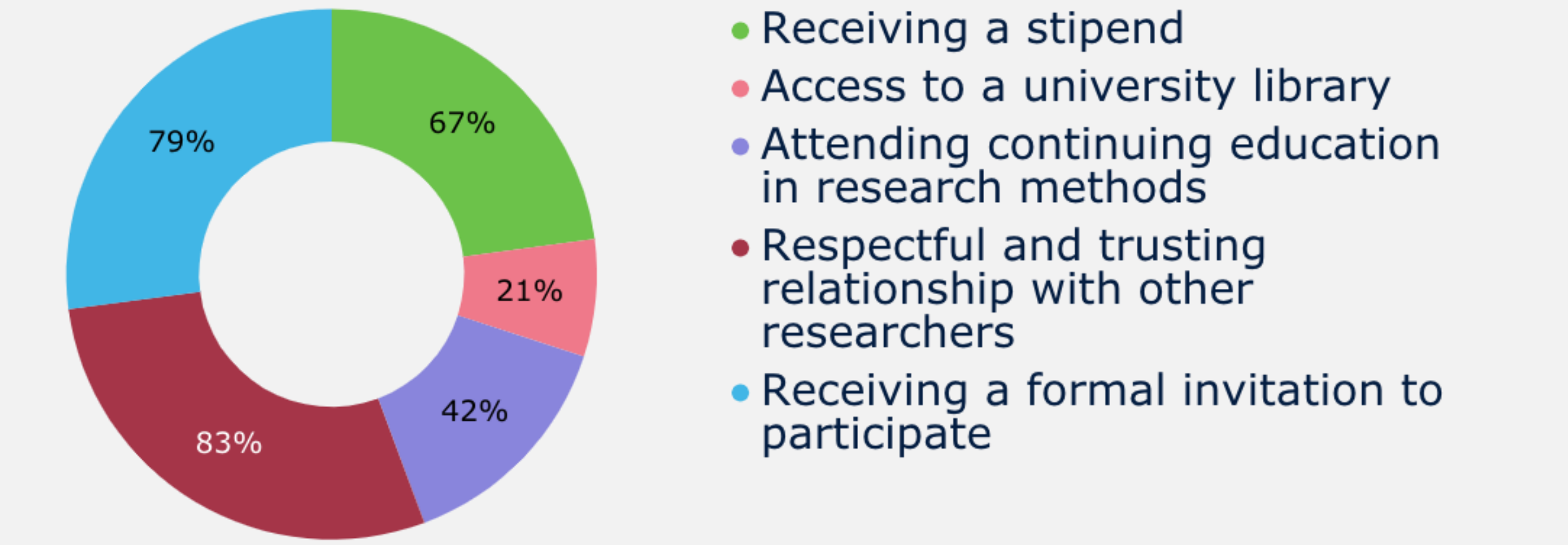


Figure 5. Perceived support required to participate in research collaboration (N=24) The relationship between researchers and clinicians was viewed to be an important support and identifies this as a core element of successful collaborations (Olswang & Goldstein, 2017).

Discussion and Conclusion

Results indicated that the majority of the respondents were interested in collaborating on research in two distinct manners. This is a positive finding as clinicians' input provides a clinical, real-life, client-centered perspective which researchers can capitalize on in framing research questions. Results of such research can better guide clinical practice and impact the implementation of EB protocols (Craig, 2014; Olswang & Goldstein, 2017). Developing an active collaborative partnership from the initiation of the research development process itself could inform research designs. These would lead to treatment protocols that are intended to be used in practice. The current findings point to a strong interest in collecting data, which validates partnering clinicians. Researcher-clinician collaboration needs to address the biggest barrier, time constraints, in creative ways. For example, presenting a CE which brings clinicians and researchers together, followed by a research introduction session could be accompanied by a research development session. The results highlighted topical research interests in the region, which can be explored by researchers and clinicians as collaborative projects in future to improve outcomes of clients. Conclusion: Collaboration can narrow the researcher-clinician gap and lead to more clinically based research questions. Answers to these questions will lead to EB practices and improved client outcomes

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Disclosure

Kara Detty, B.S., Lauren Fabrize, B.S., Mary Trifiro, B.S., Jessica Weiner, B.S. and Brenda Louw, D.Phil., have no relevant financial or nonfinancial conflicts of interest to report for this study.

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